

# PLANNING GUIDE *For Community Events*



Produced by The University of Texas at Austin  
Department of Kinesiology and Health Education  
with support from the  
Texas Diabetes Program/Council  
Texas Department of State Health Services



# WALK TEXAS!



## Planning Guide for Community Events

**WALK TEXAS!** is a community-based program with the mission to promote the health of Texans by increasing awareness and opportunities for individuals to engage in regular physical activity, especially walking. Walking is one of the safest and most natural forms of exercise and can help control a variety of chronic diseases, particularly diabetes, obesity, and coronary heart disease. Walk Texas! takes a multifaceted approach to facilitating walking and physical activity among Texans through the support of the following:

- ★ Community coalitions
- ★ Environment and policy change
- ★ Health provider assessment and counseling
- ★ Walking groups
- ★ Media and special events

Because most organizations follow a *Plan, Do, Check, Act* cycle to systematize program development, the Walk Texas! guides are organized around this cycle and are meant to complement each other.

This guide is designed to assist with the planning and implementation of community walking events. Events are successful when they incorporate the culture of the community through collaborative efforts, careful planning, and community wide marketing and promotion. Each event has its own personality, but all community walking events should provide people the opportunity to participate in a fun and safe form of physical activity.

This guide includes steps and recommendations for planning a walking event, sample forms and timelines, as well as a list of community resources.

Other guides in this series include:

- ★ Media Guide: Navigating Media Relations
- ★ Quick Start Guide to a Physically Active Organization
- ★ Walking/Biking Guide: Advocating for Environmental Change
- ★ Evaluation Guide





# Ten Steps To A Successful Walking Event

These steps are designed to walk you through the process of planning a community walking event. The larger your event, the more you would rely on multiple sub-committees. If you are planning a smaller event, you may only work with a steering committee and event volunteers. Review the steps and adjust them to meet your needs. Call on local resources whenever possible, ask questions, attend other events, and learn from others. There is no right or wrong way to plan and hold a walking event. Personalize the event to your community and enjoy the process so that your participants have an enjoyable experience.



## STEP 1

### COLLABORATE WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS WHO ARE INVOLVED WITH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INITIATIVES

- ★ YMCAs
- ★ Civic groups
- ★ Local government
- ★ Hospitals
- ★ Worksites
- ★ Churches
- ★ Schools
- ★ Health clubs
- ★ Nonprofit health agencies



## STEP 2

### CREATE A STEERING COMMITTEE TO OUTLINE EVENT EXPECTATIONS, GOALS, AND SUBCOMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

Subcommittees, your steering committee, or individual volunteers can carry out the following functions:

- ★ Steering
  - ★ Plan the type of event: distance, location, date, time, teams or individuals; competitive or noncompetitive
  - ★ Determine the event name and theme
  - ★ Decide on your target participants: adults, youth, families, corporate teams



[www.pedbikeimages.org](http://www.pedbikeimages.org)  
Don Budden



## ★ Budget

- ★ Develop an event budget, expenses, and expected income if event is a fundraiser

## ★ Publicity & Promotion

- ★ Design logo for t-shirts, printed brochures, and posters
- ★ Develop all printed materials, brochures, flyers, and website advertisements
- ★ Distribute promotional materials
- ★ Arrange photo coverage for the day of the event

## ★ Sponsorship

- ★ Solicit community to secure financial donations to underwrite the cost of your event
- ★ Secure donated items for prizes, giveaways, food and beverages
- ★ Provide sponsors' recognition on brochures, posters, t-shirts, and information packets

## ★ Logistics

- ★ Secure permits and accompanying fees
- ★ Arrange security, restrooms, barricades, parking, electrical and PA systems, rentals, facilities, and emergency medical services (EMS)
- ★ Whenever practical, try to stay with as few vendors as possible in order to keep things simpler

## ★ Entertainment & Activities

- ★ Arrange for local celebrities to attend or perform
- ★ Contact school bands and organizations, local radio stations, DJs, or live bands
- ★ Plan children's activities, such as face painting, moon walks, or balloon artists
- ★ Contact local health clinics or hospitals to provide health screenings and information booths



## ★ Volunteers

- ★ Solicit community organizations, schools, and local corporations to volunteer for day of event and clean up
- ★ Organize volunteers for pre-event and day of event activities and any post-event follow-up
- ★ Recognize volunteers with a special t-shirt and acknowledge appreciation for their work

## ★ Food/Refreshments

- ★ Contact local restaurants, grocery stores, and vendors to donate water, fruit, and snacks
- ★ Arrange water stations along the course

## ★ Communications

- ★ Arrange Public Service Announcements (PSAs) with TV and radio stations
- ★ Set up newspaper and radio advertisements prior to the event
- ★ Arrange for TV and newspaper coverage on the day of your event, including a personal interview with a participant

## ★ Giveaways

- ★ Provide registration packet, bag, or envelope
- ★ Secure donated items for participant registration packets (coupons, magnets, pens & pencils, sports trinkets, etc.)



## ★ Registration/Check-in

- ★ Coordinate participant check-in the day of the event
- ★ Arrange for late registrations
- ★ Provide participant numbers in packets
- ★ Collect any additional monies if the event is a fundraiser

## ★ Clean Up

- ★ Arrange volunteers for trash removal during and after the event
- ★ Help with facilities cleanup and breakdown of tables, tents, etc.





- ★ Recognition and event evaluation

- ★ Recognize participants who: raise the most money, complete the course in the least amount of time, represent the biggest team, etc.
- ★ Send out thank you letters and recognize sponsors and participants after the event

### **STEP 3**    **ESTABLISH AN EVENT BUDGET**

- ★ Itemize income, including registration fees, community and corporate sponsors
- ★ Itemize expenses, including facility equipment rentals, permits & fees, printing, mailing, t-shirts, prizes, entertainment, and food

### **STEP 4**    **CREATE AN EVENT TIMELINE WITH COMMITTEE TASKS AND DEADLINES**

*(see sample Event Timeline)*

### **STEP 5**    **DESIGN A DETAILED SITE PLAN AND COURSE MAP**

- ★ Be sure to communicate with community businesses and residents who may be impacted by your event
- ★ Include the course map in the event brochure

### **STEP 6**    **PLAN FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY OF YOUR EVENT**

*(see Publicity and Marketing of Special Events, page 11)*

- ★ Design your promotional brochure *(see page 12)*
- ★ Consider all media outlets
  - ★ PSAs on radio or television
  - ★ Newspaper ads, posting in the community events page, newsletters
  - ★ Email
  - ★ Counter brochures at event sponsors and sporting goods stores
  - ★ Distribution of event brochures at other walks
- ★ Be sure to begin communication at least 2 to 3 months prior to the event



## **STEP 7**    **DEVELOP A DETAILED SCHEDULE FOR DAY OF EVENT ACTIVITIES**

*(see Day of Event Checklist)*

## **STEP 8**    **PROVIDE A VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR FOR DAY OF THE EVENT**

### ★ Volunteer Sources

- ★ Corporate partners
- ★ Senior citizen centers
- ★ Civic groups
- ★ Schools & Universities
- ★ Youth groups
- ★ Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts

## **STEP 9**    **PLAN FOR MEDIA COVERAGE FOR DAY OF EVENT**

- ★ Contact newspaper and TV stations to cover your event
- ★ Arrange for participant interviews or a special interest story
- ★ Arrange for live radio broadcast

## **STEP 10**    **ARRANGE A POST-EVENT EVALUATION WITH KEY VOLUNTEERS AND STEERING COMMITTEE**

- ★ Ask for suggestions for next year
- ★ Discuss what was successful or unsuccessful
- ★ Establish contacts and volunteers for future events



# *Sample Event Timeline*

Planning a community walk should begin at least 4-6 months in advance. The following general guidelines should provide for adequate time to plan your event.

## **FOUR – SIX MONTHS BEFORE EVENT**

ACTIVITIES	ASSIGNED TO	COMPLETION DATE
Select chairman, steering committee		
Recruit subcommittee members		
Set event budget		
Set and confirm date, time and place		
Determine goal of event and event name		
Decide on event logo		
Begin work on promotional materials		

## **FOUR MONTHS BEFORE EVENT**

ACTIVITIES	ASSIGNED TO	COMPLETION DATE
Approach corporate and media sponsors		
Confirm sponsors		

## **THREE MONTHS BEFORE EVENT**

ACTIVITIES	ASSIGNED TO	COMPLETION DATE
Prepare media materials, PSAs, posters, brochures, banners, etc.		
Reserve equipment rentals, confirm facility fees and permits		
Contact health organizations to provide health screenings and information		
Recruit local celebrity as honorary event spokesperson		

## **TWO MONTHS BEFORE EVENT**

ACTIVITIES	ASSIGNED TO	COMPLETION DATE
Distribute PSAs to radio and TV stations		
Recruit entertainment, school bands, musical groups, children's activities		
Confirm food, snacks, water stations		
Distribute event brochures and posters in community		
Begin recruiting volunteers for day of event		





## SIX WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENT

ACTIVITIES	ASSIGNED TO	COMPLETION DATE
Order t-shirts and prizes		
Order participant numbers		
Begin recruiting volunteers to help day of event		

## ONE MONTH BEFORE EVENT

ACTIVITIES	ASSIGNED TO	COMPLETION DATE
Begin running promotional articles and PSAs		
Set up interviews for newspapers, TV and radio		
Prepare site signage: information, check-in, first aid, start/finish, volunteer check-in		
Reconfirm <b>ALL</b> commitments		
Make a dry run through event course		

## TWO – THREE WEEKS BEFORE EVENT

ACTIVITIES	ASSIGNED TO	COMPLETION DATE
Begin media blitz: TV & radio talk shows		
Submit newspaper community events advertisement		

## ONE WEEK BEFORE EVENT

ACTIVITIES	ASSIGNED TO	COMPLETION DATE
Communicate to local businesses affected by the course		
Contact media for day of event coverage		
Complete participant registration list		
Put together participant packets		
Pick up t-shirts & prizes		

## DAY OF EVENT: *See Day of Event Checklist*

## ONE WEEK AFTER EVENT

ACTIVITIES	ASSIGNED TO	COMPLETION DATE
Mail thank you letters to sponsors, volunteers, and community partners		
Communicate final event participation count and amount of money raised to all sponsors		
Secure committee feedback and suggestions for next year		
Organize event binder for next year		





## *Day Of Event Checklist*

- ✎ Set up course markers with cones, roadblocks, and start/finish line
- ✎ Set up tents
- ✎ Set up registration table
- ✎ Organize packet pickup by alphabet
- ✎ Set up public announcement system
- ✎ Post signage for all areas
- ✎ Set up stage area
- ✎ Strategically place trash receptacles
- ✎ Direct photographer to appropriate location
- ✎ Layout electrical extension cords
- ✎ Mark off children's activity area
- ✎ Set up refreshment area
- ✎ Identify First Aid area
- ✎ Set up water stations
- ✎ Announce race start time
- ✎ Start race
- ✎ Continue entertainment throughout event
- ✎ Thank sponsors throughout race
- ✎ Announce first walkers or runners to finish
- ✎ Thank participants for attending event
- ✎ Cleanup site: take down tables, tents, electrical equipment, and organize trash disposal



## *Sample Waiver For Participants*

In consideration of being permitted to participate in \_\_\_\_\_, I hereby assume any and all risks, which might be associated with the event, for heirs, my personal representatives, and myself. I further waive, release, discharge, and covenant not to sue either the \_\_\_\_\_, their management, their officers, members, sponsors, organizers, or their representatives for any injuries or damages of any kind whatsoever suffered as a result of taking part in the event and any related activities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT'S SIGNATURE (IF UNDER 18)





# *Publicity And Marketing Of Special Events*

- ★ Whom do you want to reach?
  - ★ Develop a list of target populations, include demographics
  
- ★ What tool will best reach these people?
  - ★ Major Media Television & Radio
    - ★ Ask about PSAs
    - ★ Send event information to news editor
    - ★ Ask for live interviews on newscast or radio show
  - ★ Major Media Newspaper
    - ★ Letters to the editor
    - ★ Photos
  - ★ Alternative Media
    - ★ Local magazines, weekly newspapers, websites
    - ★ Posters in local businesses, banners, counter brochures
  
- ★ Use all media sources available and use them consistently
  - ★ Notify media of events
  - ★ Arrange for participant interviews, include personal success stories
  
- ★ Provide media packets at the event
  - ★ Information on event
  - ★ Current health facts or statistics on your cause
  - ★ Schedule of events
  - ★ Contact person for interviews
  
- ★ Thank sponsors and participants after the event!





# *Key Items To Include On Your Event Promotional Brochure*

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★ Name of event

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★ Date, time, location

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★ Map

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★ Contact phone number

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★ Registration fees

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★ Website for registration on-line

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★ Information on “In the event of rain”

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★ Parking location

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★ Event special activities

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★ Tear off registration form

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★ Participant name

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★ Address

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★ Participation waiver

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★ Participant email address

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★ T-shirt size

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★ Team name (if applicable)

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★ Payment methods: check, credit card

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